

GREENHOUSE BLUES

Ruth sat on the couch, resting her eyes, her feet propped up on the hassock, her toddler son Roy leaned against her, asleep, drooling, beads of sweat sparkling on his face. Steam rose from the back lawn as the morning sun floated up over the brown hills like a hydrogen bomb. Ruth's husband, Ellis, shirtless in bermudas, his red-ruffled apron damp with the perspiration and humidity, finished the dishes, giving the Teflon frying pan a last slow, careless wipe with a dirty dish towel before he set it in the rack and stepped over to look out the sliding glass door, over his lawn and across the creek bed at Old Man Yoshimura's now-brown orange orchard. "A scorcher," he said to himself, "Another scorcher." Ruth stirred on the couch. Baby Roy's head slid off her wet flank and bounced into her lap. "What was that, Honey?" she whispered, her eyes closed as she rubbed her baby's back. "Nothin'," said Ellis. "Nothin'."

When the sun had sizzled into the ocean, the geckos appeared on the walls and ceilings, silent, their throats pulsing with their reptilian respiration, their eyes, with the dark, vertical-slit pupils, watching, watching.

Dan Lennham